DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 310 EA 019 376

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TITLE Geographic Education: An Investment in Your Students' Future.
PUB DATE 22 Feb 87
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (New Orleans, LA, February 20-23, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship Education; *Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Geography Instruction; *Global Approach; *Instructional Innovation; Microcomputers; Technological Advancement; Videodisks; *World Geography
IDENTIFIERS *Japan; National Geographic Society

ABSTRACT

This speech bemoans the deplorable state of geography education in the United States. American students' geographical knowledge is far inferior to that of European, Russian, Japanese, Canadian, or Australian students. This nation's young people literally do not know where they are, what other cultures are like, or how things fit together. A recent test of high school students by CBS affiliates disclosed that 25 percent of Dallas (Texas) seniors could not name the nation bordering the United States on the south. According to this paper, ignorance of geography can deter, frustrate, and defeat us in our local, state, national, and global endeavors. After describing several military, foreign policy, and business blunders, the paper urges administrators to help teachers rekindle students' interest by harnessing new technologies like videodiscs and microcomputers. Especially promoted are video and software resources produced by National Geographic Society. As people who supposedly nurture, motivate, and instruct teachers, administrators must assume greater leadership for improving geography education. The paper mentions 2 pilot programs and 15 geographic alliances sponsored by the National Geographic Society. The latter provides a forum for inservice teacher training, a healthy exchange of teaching ideas, and grass-roots involvement in curriculum revision. (MLH)

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Speech given by Gilbert M. Grosvenor
President, National Geographic Society
before the American Association of School Administrators
in New Orleans
February 22, 1987

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THANK YOU DR. ROYSTER - GOOD AFTERNOON.

WHILE I'M HONORED TO BE HERE TODAY, MY MESSAGE TO YOU BRINGS ME NO PLEASURE. I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU SOME GOOD NEWS -- THAT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES IS FIRST CLASS... THAT THE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY-- MY PREEMINENT CONCERN -- ENJOYS AN APPROPRIATE PLACE IN THE CURRICULUM. I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU THAT TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IS FLOURISHING IN U.S. CLASSROOMS, THAT EDUCATORS SUCH AS YOURSELVES HAVE DONE A GREAT JOB PREPARING OUR KIDS FOR THE WORLD OF TOMORROW. I'D LOVE TO STAND UP HERE AND PAT MYSELF -- AND YOU -- ON THE BACK. BUT I CAN'T.

LET ME TELL YOU WHY I CAN'T. TWO YEARS AGO, I ACCEPTED AN AWARD FROM THE KAPPA DELTA PI CHAPTER OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, AN AWARD TO THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY AS "EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR." WELL, I WAS EMBARRASSED, BECAUSE AT THE SAME TIME, I BEGAN TO RECEIVE REPORTS OF THE DISASTROUS LACK OF GEOGRAPHIC LITERACY AMONG OUR NATION'S STUDENTS. HERE IS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, THE FLAGSHIP OF U.S. GEOGRAPHY FOR ALMOST A CENTURY -- FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE REALITY OF A NATION FULL OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT GEOGRAPHY - WHERE THEY ARE, WHAT THE WORLD IS LIKE, WHAT OTHER CULTURES ARE LIKE, HOW THINGS FIT TOGETHER. WITH ALL OF OUR VEHICLES

EA 019 376

TO DELIVER GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS NATION, IT WAS SHOCKING TO REALIZE THAT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HAD MISSED THE BUS. WE HAD FAILED IN OUR MISSION. I SAID THEN THAT THE AWARD WOULD BE BETTER GIVEN TO THE "NON-EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR," CONSIDERING THE APPALLING STATE OF GEOGRAPHY IN OUR SCHOOLS.

GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN THIS NATION DOES NOT MEASURE UP TO THAT IN EUROPE, THE USSR, JAPAN, CANADA OR AUSTRALIA. IN FACT, OUR STUDENTS RANK IN THE PACK OF THIRD WORLD NATIONS. WE DO NOT TRAIN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SO THAT THEY CAN EXCEL IN OUR HIGHLY COMPETITIVE WORLD.

JUST A MONTH AGO, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT WROTE THAT JOHNNY CAN'T READ, WRITE OR COUNT. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THAT IS CORRECT OR NOT. I DO KNOW THAT HE DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HE IS -- THAT GEOGRAPHICALLY HE'S LOST. BUT I'LL GET TO THAT IN A MINUTE. MY CONCERN IS THAT CHILDREN IN OTHER INDUSTRIAL NATIONS ARE RECEIVING BETTER EDUCATIONS THAN WE ARE PROVIDING IN ALMOST EVERY AREA OF THE CURRICULUM. WHY?

BECAUSE OTHER COUNTRIES REALIZE THAT THE HUMAN RESOURCE IS A COMMODITY FAR MORE PRECIOUS THAN ANY NATURAL RESOURCE EXTRACTED FROM THE EARTH. OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE MOBILIZED GOVERNMENT, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, TEACHERS AND PARENTS. <u>TOGETHER</u> THEY DEVOTE THE TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT NECESSARY TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN TO BE EFFECTIVE INFORMED CITIZENS. LET ME ILLUSTRATE HOW INFERIOR AMERICAN CHILDREN

ARE IN GEOGRAPHY.

FROM EVERY STATE IN THE NATION COME REPORTS THAT U.S. STUDENTS DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THEY ARE. LAST MONTH, CBS NEWS AFFILIATES AROUND THE COUNTRY TESTED HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ON BASIC GEOGRAPHY. THEY FOUND THAT 25 PERCENT OF DALLAS SENIORS COULDN'T NAME THE NATION THAT BORDERS THE U.S. ON THE SOUTH; THAT NEARLY HALF OF BALTIMORE STUDENTS TESTED COULDN'T LOCATE THE UNITED STATES ON A MAP OF THE WORLD; THAT HALF OF THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN MINNEAPOLIS COULDN'T NAME THREE COUNTRIES IN AFRICA. SOME OF YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE ME; SOME OF YOU MAY SAY, WELL SO WHAT? SOME OF YOU MAY SAY, LOOK, I'VE GOT PROBLEMS WITH DRUG ABUSE, TEENAGE PREGNANCY, WITH LACK OF MONEY. WHY SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT GEOGRAPHY? I THINK THAT'S A COP OUT. IN MY BUSINESS IF I HAVE A PRINTING PROBLEM I'M NOT GOING TO LOWER THE QUALITY OF THE EDITORIAL PRODUCT. REDOUBLE YOUR EFFORTS. CHALLENGE YOUR STAFF. MOTIVATE PARENTS. LOOK BEYOND YOUR IMMEDIATE CONCERNS AND FOCUS ON YOUR STUDENTS' INTELLECTUAL FUTURES AS WELL AS THEIR SOCIAL ONES. WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF SCHOOLS IS TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN.

GEOGRAPHY IS IMPORTANT - GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT. TO BE AN EDUCATED CITIZEN OF THIS NATION, A PERSON MUST HAVE AN ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING OF THIS COMPLEX WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE -- AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT GEOGRAPHY GIVES US. A LACK OF GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE IS DANGEROUS. AN IGNORANCE OF GEOGRAPHY CAN DETER, FRUSTRATE, AND DEFEAT US IN OUR LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ENDEAVORS.

HISTORY (WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, IS FREQUENTLY DRIVEN BY GEOGRAPHY) HAS SHOWN US THAT IGNORANCE OF GEOGRAPHY HAS PROVEN FATAL, TIME AND AGAIN. DID KING GEORGE III FULLY UNDERSTAND THE GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS - OF ISOLATION, OF ADAPTATION TO A NEW ENVIRONMENT, OF EXPLOITATION OF NEW RESOURCES - THAT TRANSFORMED COLONISTS INTO INDEPENDENT-MINDED AMERICANS? DID NAPOLEON, OR HITLER, FULLY COMPREHEND THE HARSH GEOGRAPHIC REALITIES OF INVADING THE HEARTLAND OF RUSSIA? DID THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ADEQUATELY CONSIDER THE COMPLEX HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CHINA BEFORE WE PLUNGED IN TO THAT PAINFUL, CONTROVERSIAL WAR IN VIETNAM? NO. IN EACH CASE, AS IN SO MANY OTHERS, DECISIONS MADE WITHOUT CONSIDERING CRUCIAL GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS PROVED TO BE DISASTROUS. I'M NOT SAYING THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT HAVE TRIED TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN VIETNAM. I <u>AM</u> SAYING THAT HAD OUR <u>TOP</u> DECISION-MAKERS REALLY DONE THEIR GEOGRAPHY -- HISTORY -- CULTURAL HOMEWORK OUR THRUST WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.

A COUPLE YEARS AGO, IN A TEST OF FRESHMAN AT A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY, 95% COULDN'T EVEN FIND VIETNAM ON A WORLD MAP -95% - DO YOU THINK THOSE KIDS LEARNED ANYTHING FROM THE HISTORY LESSON OF VIETNAM? I DON'T THINK SO.

GEOGRAPHY IS MORE IMPORTANT TODAY THAN EVER BEFORE. WE LIVE ON A SHRINKING PLANET -- INTERNATIONAL TRADE, INSTANT COMMUNICATIONS, AND RAPID TRANSPORTATION HAVE MADE IT SO. WE ARE ALL CLOSE,

INTERDEPENDENT NEIGHBORS ON EARTH. NEVER IN HISTORY HAVE WE MORE URGENTLY NEEDED TO KNOW OUR NEIGHBORS - WHERE THEY ARE, HOW THEY LIVE, WHY THEY THINK AND ACT AS THEY DO.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING GEOGRAPHY GOES FAR BEYOND THE REALM OF MILITARY AND FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS. IT IS ESSENTIAL IN EVERYDAY LIFE. CONSIDER BUSINESS. ANYONE WHO UNDERESTIMATES THE IMPORTANCE OF GEOGRAPHIC "SAVVY" IN TODAY'S MARKETPLACE RISKS BANKRUPTCY. SUCCESS OR FAILURE OFTEN HINGES ON VITAL GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PEOPLE KNOW AND USE GEOGRAPHY. THE STATE OF TENNESSEE SECURED GM'S HUGE SATURN PLANT FOR A SITE IN SPRING HILL, BEATING OUT 1,000 OTHER COMPETING SITES IN 38 STATES. TENNESSEE OFFICIALS CONVINCED GM THAT THE GEOGRAPHY OF SPRING HILL MATCHED THE COMPANY'S NEEDS -- I.E., LOCATION, PLACE, REGION, CLIMATE, TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY, POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY. KENTUCKY SIMILARLY SOLD THE JAPANESE ON A SITE IN THAT STATE FOR A NEW TOYOTA ASSEMBLY PLANT. ON A LOCAL SCALE, THINK ABOUT THE LOCATION DECISIONS OF RETAIL STORES OR RESTAURANTS. A STORE WITH A POOR LOCATION IS BOUND TO FAIL. A GOOD LOCATION WILL MOST OFTEN RESULT IN SUCCESS. SO WHEN I TELL YOU THAT OUT OF 3,800 7-ELEVEN STORES OPERATING IN 1983, ONLY 13 LOST MONEY - WHAT DOES THAT TELL YOU ABOUT 7-ELEVEN'S EFFECTIVE USE OF GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS? THESE ARE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF GEOGRAPHY - BASIC GEOGRAPHY, INTENSELY PRACTICAL AT EVERY LEVEL FROM LOCAL TO

GLOBAL. I MAINTAIN THAT THE PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS OF GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE HAVE INCREASED DRAMATICALLY IN OUR INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD. THE LEVELS OF PROFIT ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO WHICH BUSINESSES BEST UNDERSTAND THE COUNTRY THEY ARE DOING BUSINESS WITH.

UNFORTUNATELY, EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT MUCH OF THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY DOES NOT USE GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE TO ITS ADVANTAGE. CONSIDER THIS FACT IN LIGHT OF THE EVER-INCREASING U.S. FOREIGN TRADE DEFICIT. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 80 PERCENT OF U.S. COMPANIES THAT COULD EXPORT TO LUCRATIVE FOREIGN MARKETS IGNORE THEIR OPPORTUNITIES. MIGHT THIS NOT STEM FROM AN IGNORANCE OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, RESOURCES, AND PEOPLES? AN IGNORANCE OF GEOGRAPHY?

WHAT NATION IS THE BUSINESS COMPETITION? JAPAN, OF COURSE. JAPAN HAD A $59 BILLION DOLLAR TRADE SURPLUS WITH THE U.S. LAST YEAR. JAPAN IS NOT IGNORANT OF GEOGRAPHY, OF FOREIGN MARKETS, OF AMERICAN MARKETS. ACCORDING TO A RECENT SOUTHERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION FINDING, THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 10,000 ENGLISH-SPEAKING JAPANESE BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES IN THE U.S., BUT FEWER THAN 900 AMERICAN REPS IN JAPAN - ONLY A HANDFUL OF WHOM SPEAK JAPANESE. TEN THOUSAND TO NINE HUNDRED. JAPANESE BUSINESS IS USING GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE - OF U.S. RESOURCES, LANGUAGE, CUSTOMS, ECONOMICS - TO ITS ADVANTAGE, WHILE MOST U.S. BUSINESSES APPARENTLY ARE NOT. WHAT HAPPENED?

THE SCENE IS SET IN 1945. LET'S LOOK AT THE UNITED STATES AND

JAPAN. THE USA WAS KING OF THE MOUNTAIN: POWERFUL, INFLUENTIAL, HIGHLY INDUSTRIALIZED; WITHOUT PEERS TECHNOLOGICALLY, WEALTHY, THE WORLD'S CREDITOR, A NATION BLESSED WITH ENDLESS AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES. WE WERE REASONABLY WELL-SCHOOLED.

NOW, LET'S LOOK AT JAPAN -- A BEATEN, BROKEN NATION IN 1945, A COUNTRY IN ASHES, NO ECONOMY, NO INDUSTRY, DEVOID OF TRADITIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES, LIMITED SPACE, NO TECHNOLOGY, A PEOPLE ISOLATED FROM THE WORLD FOR 2,000 YEARS, NO FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITY, NO GOVERNMENT.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE FOUR DECADES SINCE? THE U.S. POSITION OF STRENGTH HAS ERODED -- WE HAVE SLID FROM OUR POSITION AS THE WORLD'S TOP CREDITOR NATION TO BECOME ITS LARGEST DEBTOR -- OUR INDUSTRIAL BASE AND OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM HAVE BECOME MIRED IN THE QUICKSAND OF COMPLACENCY; AND THE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY HAS VIRTUALLY DIED -- BURIED IN SOCIAL STUDIES. SOME OF OUR GREAT UNIVERSITIES STILL REIGN SUPREME, LIKE M.I.T. BUT LOOK AT THE M.I.T. MEDIA LABORATORY -- THE CUTTING EDGE OF COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY. IT IS GREATLY FINANCED BY JAPANESE INDUSTRY, BUT MORE IMPORTANT IS THE FACT THAT TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPED THERE IS BEING MASS PRODUCED IN JAPAN. TV'S, VIDEODISCS, RADIOS, CALCULATORS, YOU NAME IT. NEED I MENTION AUTOMOBILES?

JAPAN CLEARLY HAS SOARED -- THAT NATION HAS RISEN LIKE A PHOENIX

FROM THE ASHES, HAS BECOME THE WORLD'S CREDITOR NATION, ITS ECONOMY IS SECOND TO NONE, THE EDUCATION OF ITS PEOPLE IS ASTONISHING -- AND YOU KNOW WHAT? -- THEY TAKE THEIR GEOGRAPHY -- ALL EDUCATION -- VERY SERIOUSLY.

ONE BASIC DIFFERENCE EXISTS IN THESE TWO NATIONS. JAPAN HAS SUCCESSFULLY HARNESSED ITS ONE CRUCIAL NATURAL RESOURCE -- HOMO SAPIEN. THEY ARE WELL-EDUCATED, WORK ETHIC ORIENTED PEOPLE. THEY ARE TAUGHT SELF-RELIANCE AND LOYALTY.

TODAY IN THE USA, TRADITIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES WILL NO LONGER CARRY US. WE, TOO, MUST HARNESS HOMO SAPIEN. WE MUST START AT HOME, THEN CAPTURE STUDENTS' INTEREST IN THE CLASSROOM. THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED LAST MONDAY THAT MORE AND MORE CAPABLE STUDENTS ARE DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL. USING HOUSTON AS AN EXAMPLE, IT SAID THAT 25 PERCENT OF THE DROP-OUTS WERE IN THE TOP QUARTER OF THEIR CLASSES. FRIGHTENING! THESE ARE THE VERY STUDENTS YOU WANT TO KEEP IN SCHOOL. WHY THE DROP-OUT? THE ARTICLE CITES NO PARTICULAR REASON BUT I SUGGEST A THEORY. THE BRIGHT KIDS ARE SIMPLY BORED. REARED ON TELEVISION, COMFORTABLE WITH THE MOVING IMAGE, THEY ARE BORED WITH TRADITIONAL 1930S TEXT BOOKS, BORED WITH SUBJECT MATTER PRESENTED IN A VACUUM. THEY ARE EXPECTED TO LEARN SOPHISTICATED INFORMATION WITH ANTIQUATED TECHNIQUES. LIKE IT OR NOT, OUR KIDS CAN ABSORB PRODIGIOUS INFORMATION VISUALLY BECAUSE OF THEIR CONSTANT EXPOSURE TO THE MOVING IMAGE. LET'S FACE IT. WITH SUBJECTS LIKE GEOGRAPHY, PRINTED MATERIAL JUST CAN'T COMPETE WITH THE VISUAL IMAGE.

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS WILL NOT SUCCEED IN TEACHING GEOGRAPHY.

TECHNOLOGY MUST BE HARNESSED FOR THE CLASSROOM. OBVIOUSLY, I'M BIASED -- THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY IS VISUALLY ORIENTED. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT STUDENTS TODAY WILL RESPOND TO THE MOVING IMAGE (AND TO COMPUTERS), THAT NEW TECHNOLOGIES MUST BE UTILIZED IN THE CLASSROOM TO EFFECTIVELY REACH AND TEACH MODERN AMERICANS.

RIGHT NOW, WE ARE RESEARCHING AND DEVELOPING SOPHISTICATED TEACHING MATERIALS THAT TODAY'S STUDENTS CAN APPRECIATE AND USE -- SOFTWARE TO TEACH GEOGRAPHY ON A SYSTEM COMBINING THE TECHNOLOGIES OF COMPUTERS AND VIDEODISC PLAYERS.

TO DO THIS, I NEED ONLY TECHNOLOGY THAT IS OFF THE SHELF, INEXPENSIVE, AND AVAILABLE TODAY. IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD BUY THE CONTENTS OF ALL 400 FILMSTRIPS THAT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PRODUCES -- SOME OF THE FINEST PHOTOGRAPHY AND INSTRUCTIONAL GEOGRAPHY TEXT ON THE MARKET -- ON A SINGLE VIDEODISC FOR NO MORE THAN $30. A $20,000 VALUE FOR A MERE $30. WOULD YOU BUY IT? WOULD YOU USE IT?

IMAGINE -- A PRINTED ATLAS ACCOMPANIED BY A LASER DISC PACKED WITH 54,000 IMAGES THAT WOULD PROPEL THE STUDENT FROM THE PRINTED BLACK LINE OF A PAPER ROADWAY TO A HIGHWAY OF VISUAL ADVENTURE AND KNOWLEDGE. COST? THIRTY DOLLARS. CHEAP. TAKE OTHER DISCIPLINES. IMAGINE PUTTING THE WORLD'S GREATEST ART COLLECTION ON ONE OR TWO DISCS SELLING FOR $50. PLACE THOSE MATERIALS IN KOTZEBUE OR POINT

BARROW, ALASKA, WHERE THEY HAVE NOTHING. IMAGINE THE PRIDE NATIVE STUDENTS WOULD TAKE IN SEEING THEIR OWN CULTURAL BACKGROUND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES! WE ARE ALREADY PRODUCING VIDEODISCS. BUT HOW AM I GOING TO SELL THEM? YOUR TEACHERS WON'T USE THEM BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE THE MACHINES. THEY DON'T HAVE THE MACHINES BECAUSE ADMINISTRATORS FEAR NEW INVESTMENTS WILL BE OBSOLETE NEXT YEAR. IN QUANTITY, THESE MACHINES COULD SELL FOR A PRICE LESS THAN ONE 30-MINUTE FILM.

I WANT TO PRODUCE VIDEODISCS FOR GEOGRAPHY INSTRUCTION AND HAVE THEM USED. SUCH A SYSTEM COULD SERVE ALL TEACHERS: THE ATYPICAL, LAZY TEACHER COULD FLIP A SWITCH AND RUN A COMPLETE LESSON. THE SUPER AMBITIOUS TEACHER COULD SEARCH OUT EXAMPLES FROM 54,000 IMAGES AND BUILD A SPECIAL LESSON PLAN, CUSTOM-MADE FOR HIS OR HER CLASS.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IS ALSO WORKING HARD TO UTILIZE THE MORE THAN 1 MILLION MICROCOMPUTERS IN THE NATION'S K-12 SCHOOLS. WE HAVE JUST FINALIZED A PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD A NATION-WIDE COMPUTER NETWORK TO LINK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EARTH SCIENCE CLASSROOMS. WILL YOU USE THIS? I'M NOT SO SURE.

WHAT DO YOU USE FOR RESOURCE MATERIALS IN YOUR CLASSROOMS? FILMSTRIPS? THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY STILL PRODUCES TRADITIONAL FILMSTRIPS -- ABOUT 30 NEW TITLES A YEAR. THEY ARE WORKHORSES, A STAPLE, BUT THEY ARE ANTIQUATED AND CAN'T BEGIN TO GRAB THE ATTENTION OF TODAY'S TELEVISION CHILDREN.

SO HERE I AM, STANDING HERE TALKING TO YOU ABOUT HOW KIDS NEED TO LEARN GEOGRAPHY - HOW I'VE FAILED. AND WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO ABOUT IT. BUT I NEED YOUR HELP, BECAUSE YOU ARE THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN. YOU ARE THE PEOPLE WHO CAN MAKE OR BREAK EDUCATION IN AMERICA. YOU ARE THE PEOPLE WHO MUST NURTURE, ENTHUSE, AND INSTRUCT TEACHERS. HOW CAN TEACHERS IMBUE THEIR CHILDREN WITH A SENSE OF WONDER AT THE VALUE AND BEAUTY OF GEOGRAPHY IF THEY HAVE NO GOOD MATERIALS TO WORK WITH?

YOU MAY NOT REALIZE THIS, BUT I TALK TO TEACHERS ALL THE TIME. AND I LISTEN. THEY TELL ME THINGS. LAST SUMMER 50 TEACHERS ATTENDED OUR SUMMER GEOGRAPHY INSTITUTE. MORE THAN 75% OF THEM SPENT $500 OF THEIR OWN MONEY TO PURCHASE CLASSROOM MATERIALS. THEY SPEND SUBSTANTIAL MONEY TO EFFECTIVELY TEACH GEOGRAPHY. WHY? EITHER THEIR SCHOOLS WON'T PROVIDE THE MATERIALS, OR THEIR ADMINISTRATIONS THROW SO MUCH RED TAPE IN THE WAY, THAT IT'S MUCH EASIER TO GIVE UP AND SACRIFICE PERSONAL INCOME, OR LIBRARIANS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN COLLECTING THAN LENDING. TEACHERS TELL ME THAT WHILE THEY'VE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO GET CLASSROOM VCRS, THE MACHINES ARE USELESS BECAUSE THEY CAN'T GET ANY TAPES. TEACHERS GIVE UP BECAUSE THEY CAN'T GET BULBS FOR THEIR PROJECTORS OR SHADES FOR THEIR WINDOWS. THEY'RE USING MAPS THAT HAVE AFRICA MARKED AS UNEXPLORED TERRITORY! WE ALL MUST SLASH THROUGH THESE BUREAUCRACIES SO THAT YOU AND YOUR TEACHERS CAN GET AT THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATION, THAT IS, TEACHING.

IN GEOGRAPHY, TEACHER TRAINING IS INADEQUATE. ONE SURVEY SHOWS THAT OF U.S. TEACHERS WHO TEACH GEOGRAPHY IN GRADES SEVEN THROUGH TWELVE, TWENTY TO THIRTY PERCENT HAD TAKEN NO COLLEGE GEOGRAPHY COURSES - NONE; ONLY TEN PERCENT HAD MAJORED IN GEOGRAPHY. IF I HEAR OF ONE MORE FOOTBALL COACH BEING PRESSED IN TO TEACHING GEOGRAPHY, I THINK I'LL CRY. WHY NOT HIRE A REAL GEOGRAPHY TEACHER AND HAVE HIM - -OR HER - COACH FOOTBALL?

PERMIT ME TO TELL YOU WHAT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY - WHAT CONCERNED PEOPLE NATIONWIDE - WHAT SOME OF YOUR FELLOW ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS ARE DOING - TO REVITALIZE GEOGRAPHY IN AMERICAN EDUCATION. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HAS COMMITTED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO RESTORE GEOGRAPHY TO AMERICAN SCHOOLS, AND WE ARE COMMITTING MILLIONS MORE - FOUR MILLION DOLLARS IN 1987. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR 99-YEAR HISTORY, OUR TRUSTEES HAVE AUTHORIZED US TO SEEK OUTSIDE FUNDING TO BOLSTER OUR EFFORTS, TO ATTACK GEOGRAPHIC IGNORANCE.

FOR A YEAR AND A HALF NOW, WE HAVE CONDUCTED PILOT SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN TWO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, ONE IN WASHINGTON, D.C., AND ONE IN L.A. A GEOGRAPHY CURRICULUM, TEACHING METHODS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ARE BEING TESTED.

IN THE PAST YEAR, WE HAVE SPONSORED NETWORKS OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND COLLEGE PROFESSORS DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY IN K-12 CLASSROOMS. THERE ARE

NOW 15 OF THESE GEOGRAPHIC ALLIANCES, IN 13 STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. THE ALLIANCES PROVIDE A FORUM FOR IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING IN GEOGRAPHIC CONTENT AND METHODS, FOR A HEALTHY EXCHANGE OF TEACHING IDEAS, AND FOR GRASSROOTS INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM REVISION.

LAST SUMMER, I WAS DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH THE ENTHUSIASM, DEDICATION, AND ABILITY OF 50 TEACHERS RECRUITED FROM EIGHT ALLIANCES, WHO GRADUATED FROM OUR FIRST SUMMER GEOGRAPHY INSTITUTE. THIS SELECT GROUP OF TEACHERS RECEIVED AND EXCHANGED FOUR WEEKS OF SPIRITED INSTRUCTION IN GEOGRAPHIC CONTENT AND TEACHING METHODS. PARTICIPANTS RECEIVED FREE TRANSPORTATION, ROOM AND BOARD, FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCES, STIPENDS, AND UNIVERSITY CREDIT IF DESIRED. INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS ARE REQUIRED TO HOLD IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS FOR COLLEAGUES IN THEIR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND STATES. THE INSTITUTE WAS A GREAT SUCCESS, AND WE ARE HOSTING ANOTHER THIS SUMMER.

I AM ENCOURAGED THAT OFFICIALS IN SEVERAL STATES HAVE ALREADY COME FORWARD TO MAKE THEIR STATES MODELS FOR THE TYPE OF MATCHING SUPPORT ESSENTIAL TO OUR GEOGRAPHY ENHANCEMENT EFFORTS. SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL GRANTS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED FOR ALLIANCE WORK BY GOVERNORS OF VIRGINIA AND TENNESSEE, BY THE WESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION (FOR COLORADO-BASED ALLIANCE PROGRAMS), AND BY THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION. MORE SUCH GRANTS, WHICH ARE MATCHED DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR BY THE SOCIETY, ARE FORTHCOMING. THIS SUPPORT SHOWS COMMITMENT - A WISE INVESTMENT - IN GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION.

LAST FALL THE SOCIETY DISTRIBUTED 6.3 MILLION FREE WALL MAPS TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS. THE TEXT EXPLAINS FIVE FUNDAMENTAL THEMES IN GEOGRAPHY, AND RELATES THEM TO THE MAP.

WE ARE WORKING HARD TO PRODUCE SOPHISTICATED AS WELL AS BASIC EDUCATIONAL TOOLS. BUT, WE CAN'T TEACH GEOGRAPHY -- TEACHERS TEACH GEOGRAPHY. WE CAN SUPPLY SOUND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, IDEAS, AND SUPPORT, BUT TEACHERS ARE THE PEOPLE WHO MUST MAKE SURE THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE A SOUND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR WORLD. I MUST RELY UPON YOU TO HELP THEM DO IT. YOU PLAY THE CRITICAL ROLE.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO INVEST IN TEACHER EDUCATION TO IMPROVE GEOGRAPHY INSTRUCTION: INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY TO REACH YOUR STUDENTS.

MOST OF YOUR GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS ARE INADEQUATELY TRAINED. ENCOURAGE THEM TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS AND PROGRAMS. THE INVESTMENT OF GRANTING TEACHERS LEAVE TIME TO ATTEND GOOD SESSIONS WILL REAP LASTING DIVIDENDS IN THE CLASSROOMS.

FURTHER, DON'T RESIST TECHNOLOGY - USE IT TO ADVANTAGE IN YOUR SCHOOLS. WE CAN'T CONTINUE TO USE 19TH CENTURY TEACHING MATERIALS TO PREPARE OUR STUDENTS FOR LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN -- THIRTY YEARS AGO THE SOVIET UNION GREATLY ENHANCED THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE IN THIS COUNTRY. THEY

LAUNCHED SPUTNIK. AS A RESULT PRESIDENT KENNEDY ANNOUNCED AN ENORMOUS CHALLENGE -- TO PUT AN AMERICAN INTO SPACE -- AND THEN ON TO THE MOON. OUR UNIVERSITIES AND AEROSPACE INDUSTRY MET THAT CHALLENGE. THAT EFFORT PROVED TO ME THAT WE CAN MEET ANY CHALLENGE, IF WE WILL ONLY PUT OUR MINDS TO IT.

SO, LET'S DO IT -- PUT OUR MINDS, AND OUR HEARTS, TO THE TASK AT HAND -- THE CHALLENGE OF BETTER EDUCATING OUR STUDENTS. LET'S HARNESS HOMO SAPIEN. A WELL-EDUCATED POPULATION IS A FAR BETTER DETERRENT TO TYRANNY THAN STAR WARS. IF THIS NATION IS TO BE A MAJOR PLAYER IN SHAPING OUR PLANET IN THE 21ST CENTURY WE MUST BEGIN TODAY, WORKING TOGETHER YOU AND THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY CAN -- AND MUST -- RESTORE GEOGRAPHY TO ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

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